

Week Ending Friday, September 13, 2002

The President's Radio Address

September 7, 2002

Good morning. Next week, our Nation will pause to honor and remember the lives lost on September the 11th. We must also remember a central lesson of the tragedy: Our homeland is vulnerable to attack, and we must do everything in our power to protect it.

We protect our country by relentlessly pursuing terrorists across the Earth, assessing and anticipating our vulnerabilities, and acting quickly to address those vulnerabilities and prevent attacks. America needs a single department of Government dedicated to the task of protecting our people. Right now, responsibilities for homeland security are scattered across dozens of departments in Washington. By ending duplication and overlap, we will spend less on overhead and more on protecting America. And we must give the Department of Homeland Security every tool it needs to succeed.

One essential tool this new Department needs is the flexibility to respond to terrorist threats that can arise or change overnight. The Department of Homeland Security must be able to move people and resources quickly, without being forced to comply with a thick book of bureaucratic rules.

For example, we have three agencies working to safeguard our borders, the INS, the Customs Service, and the Border Patrol. They all have different cultures and different strategies but should be working together in a streamlined effort. Other Federal agencies dealing with national security already have this flexibility, the FBI and the CIA and the new Transportation Security Administration. It seems like, to me, if it's good enough for these agencies, it should be good enough for the new Department of Homeland Security.

In addition, the new Secretary of Homeland Security needs the authority to transfer some funds, limited funds, among Govern-

ment accounts in response to terrorist threats. This requirement is nothing new; such authority is presently available to numerous agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Energy.

The House of Representatives has passed legislation that would ensure the flexibility and authority needed for the Department of Homeland Security to effectively carry out its mission. The legislation now in the Senate would not. The Senate bill would not allow the new Secretary of Homeland Security to shift resources or streamline functions in response to a terrorist threat without a time-consuming approval process. And the legislation would keep in place a process that can take up to 18 months just to fire an employee.

The Senate bill also provides no transfer authority for the Secretary of Homeland Security. Under the Senate bill, the Secretary would have to ask the President to submit a supplemental budget request to Congress, and then wait for Congress to act every time new terrorist threats presented a need for additional funding. In this war on terror, this is time we simply do not have.

Even worse, the Senate bill would weaken the President's well-established authority to prohibit collective bargaining when a national security interest demands it. Every President since Jimmy Carter has used this authority, and a time of war is not time to limit a President's ability to act in the interest of national security.

Senators need to understand I will not accept a homeland security bill that puts special interests in Washington ahead of the security of the American people. I will not accept a homeland security bill that ties the hands of this administration or future administrations in defending our Nation against terrorist attacks.

America has been engaged in this war for nearly a year, and we've made real progress. Yet more work remains. A new Department of Homeland Security will help us to protect our country, but only if it has the tools to get the job done. I urge the Senate to follow the House's lead and pass legislation that gives the Department the flexibility and the authority it needs to protect the American people.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:35 a.m. on September 6 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 6 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and an Exchange With Reporters at Camp David, Maryland

September 7, 2002

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome the Prime Minister back to Camp David. I look forward to spending a good 3 hours talking to our friend about how to keep the peace. This world faces some serious threat—and threats—and we're going to talk about it. We're going to talk about how to promote freedom around the world. We're going to talk about our shared values of—recognizes the worth of every individual.

And I'm looking forward to this time. It's awfully thoughtful of Tony to come over here. It's an important meeting, because he's an important ally, an important friend.

Welcome.

Prime Minister Blair. Thanks.

I'm looking very much forward, obviously, to discussing the issues that are preoccupying us at the moment, with the President. And I thank him for his kind invitation to come here and his welcome.

The point that I would emphasize to you is that the threat from Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological, potentially nuclear weapons capa-

bility, that threat is real. We only need to look at the report from the International Atomic Energy Agency this morning showing what has been going on at the former nuclear weapons sites to realize that. And the policy of inaction is not a policy we can responsibly subscribe to. So the purpose of our discussion today is to work out the right strategy for dealing with this, because deal with it we must.

President Bush. AP lady [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. Mr. President, can you tell us what conclusive evidence of any nuclear—new evidence you have of nuclear weapons capabilities of Saddam Hussein?

President Bush. We just heard the Prime Minister talk about the new report. I would remind you that when the inspectors first went into Iraq and were denied—finally denied access, a report came out of the Atomic—the IAEA that they were 6 months away from developing a weapon. I don't know what more evidence we need.

Prime Minister Blair. Absolutely right. And what we—what we know from what has been going on there for a long period of time is not just the chemical, biological weapons capability, but we know that they were trying to develop nuclear weapons capability. And the importance of this morning's report is it yet again shows that there is a real issue that has to be tackled here.

I mean, I was just reading coming over here the catalog of attempts by Iraq to conceal its weapons of mass destruction, not to tell the truth about it over—not just over a period of months but over a period of years. Now, that's why the issue is important. And of course, it's an issue not just for America, not just for Britain; it's an issue for the whole of the international community. But it is an issue we have to deal with. And that's why I say to you that the policy of inaction, doing nothing about it, is not something we can responsibly adhere to.

President Bush. Do you want to call on somebody? You don't have to if you don't want to. [Laughter]